

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH & GAME
FEDERAL AID IN FISH RESTORATION SECTION
HELENA, MONTANA

JOB COMPLETION REPORT
INVESTIGATION PROJECTS

State of Montana

Project No. F7R8

Name Northwestern Montana Fishery Study

Job No. IV

Title Survey of Cutthroat Trout Fishery in
the Flathead River and Tributaries
Above Flathead Lake

Period Covered: May 1, 1958 to April 30, 1958

Abstract: Two pirate traps were made during the year. Three tributary streams were sampled by the electric shock method in the North Fork drainage. No adult cutthroat trout were captured. No reports were obtained from anglers on marked fish tagged in previous year.

Objectives: The Flathead River and tributary streams above Flathead Lake have, in the past, provided an extensive fishery on cutthroat trout. This has declined until at present it is almost non-existent. However, it was found in past years that there is a fairly good run of Dolly Varden trout into some of the smaller tributaries of the North Fork River. During the past year, very little information was obtained on cutthroat trout due to lack of time and equipment. The objectives of this investigation are to determine the extent of cutthroat spawning areas, time and distance of movement, nature and time of recruitment to the lake, and to develop management measures so that a future fishery can be assured in this area. As an incidental objective, the same information will be obtained on Dolly Varven trout, however, emphasis will be placed on the cutthroat trout.

Techniques Used: Materials for pirate traps were obtained and two were constructed, one of $\frac{1}{2}$ inch bar measure netting and one of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. Traps were completed but too late for the spring run. Three streams in the North Fork River drainage were sampled by the electric shock method.

Findings: Cyclone Creek, Langford Creek and Teepee Creek were sampled by the electric shock method in July. On July 9, 1958, in a 300 foot section at the lower end of Cyclone Creek, 12 cutthroat trout and one whitefish were captured. The cutthroat trout ranged in length from 1.6 to 7.2 inches.

Langford Creek was sampled the same day and 45 cutthroat trout and 2 sculpins were captured. The cutthroat trout ranged in size from 2.4 to 6.2 inches total length. Some small cutthroat trout fry were observed but could not be captured with the equipment available. Teepee Creek above Teepee Lake was erroneously sampled on July 10 as the stream below the lake should have been sampled. No adult cutthroat trout were collected in any of the streams.

It is anticipated that more information will be collected this coming year since the nets are completed and proper gear is available. No tagged fish were reported caught during the report period.

The assistant project leader resigned during the year and somewhat curtailed the activity on this project.

Recommendations: It is recommended that this study be continued. The late opening date of the fishing season appears to be helping natural reproduction of cutthroat trout. Cutthroat trout are being caught in Flathead Lake from Wild Horse Island to the north shore.

Prepared by F. A. Stefanich Approved by Serge D. Halton

Date April 17, 1959